

News

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FOR RELEASE:

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AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN COLORADO: FIRST QUARTER 2005 Denver County records highest wage and fastest wage growth in the State

In the first quarter of 2005 the average weekly wage in Denver County was \$976, the highest level in Colorado among those counties and independent cities with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Denver County also experienced the fastest wage growth among the State's seven large counties, with the average weekly wage increasing 3.8 percent over the year. Jefferson County followed closely, recording a 3.7-percent wage increase. Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that among Colorado's seven large counties, four had wages above the national level of \$775; however, only two counties, Denver and Jefferson, exhibited wage growth above the national average of 2.2 percent. (See table A.)

Table A. Covered (1) employment and wages in the United States and the 7 largest counties in Colorado, first quarter 2005 (2)

Area	Employment	Average Weekly Wage (3)			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level (4)	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05 (5)	National ranking by percent change (4)
United States (6).....	129,802.3	\$775	--	2.2	--
Colorado.....	2,158.6	787	11	2.2	24
Adams, CO.....	144.2	712	154	0.3	262
Arapahoe, CO.....	268.0	943	39	1.5	182
Boulder, CO.....	152.7	919	42	-0.3	279
Denver, CO.....	418.1	976	33	3.8	37
El Paso, CO.....	235.2	692	175	0.9	230
Jefferson, CO.....	203.2	795	87	3.7	41
Larimer, CO.....	121.5	670	202	1.2	206

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(5) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(6) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Average Weekly Wages in Colorado, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

Wage levels

Three of Colorado's seven largest counties recorded average weekly wages in the first quarter of 2005 that ranked in the top 15 percent nationally. Denver County had the highest wage level (\$976), followed by Arapahoe County (\$943) and Boulder County (\$919). Denver County's average weekly wage was 25.9 percent above the national average, ranking 33rd among the 322 largest counties in the nation, while Arapahoe County's wage ranked 39th and Boulder County's, 42nd. Jefferson County also recorded a wage above the U.S. average at \$795 (87th). The remaining three counties in the State had wages below that for the nation; however, they still ranked in the top two-thirds nationwide with Adams County averaging \$712 (154th), El Paso, \$692 (175th), and Larimer, \$670 (202nd).

At the state level, Colorado's weekly wage of \$787 was slightly above the national average, ranking 11th highest among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. (See table 1.) Colorado was one of only 12 states, along with the District of Columbia, that had weekly wages surpassing the national average. Eight of these areas fell in a contiguous band along the east coast, stretching from Massachusetts to Virginia.

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average in 101 of the largest 322 U.S. counties. New York County, N.Y. was the highest-paid among the large counties, with an average weekly wage of \$2,025. Fairfield County, Conn. was second with an average weekly wage of \$1,613, followed by Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,390), Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,372), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,368). Four of the 10 counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.), 3 others were located in or around the San Francisco area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo, all in California), while 2 more were located in or around the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Arlington, Va. and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston metropolitan area.

The lowest average weekly wage was reported in Cameron County, Texas (\$460), followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$463), Horry, S.C. (\$479), Webb, Texas (\$490), and Yakima, Wash. (\$516). The average weekly wage in the lowest-paid county, Cameron, was less than one-quarter the wage in the highest-paid county, New York.

Over-the-year wage changes

Two of Colorado's seven large counties (Denver and Jefferson) recorded wage growth greater than the national increase of 2.2 percent from the first quarter of 2004 to the first quarter of 2005. As mentioned, Denver's 3.8-percent wage gain was the largest increase in the State, ranking 37th in the nation, and Jefferson's 3.7-percent gain ranked 41st. Of the remaining five counties, three recorded wage growth close to 1 percent with Arapahoe's 1.5-percent increase ranking 182nd, Larimer's 1.2-percent gain ranking 206th, and El Paso's 0.9-percent gain ranking 230th. Wages were little changed over the year in Adams County (0.3 percent) and Boulder County (-0.3 percent), with growth rates ranking in the bottom fifth nationwide at 262nd and 279th, respectively. At the state level, Colorado's wage growth of 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2005 matched the U.S. increase, placing the State in the middle of the, national ranking at 24th.

Average Weekly Wages in Colorado, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

Among the 322 largest counties, Collier, Fla., led the nation in wage growth with an increase of 10.7 percent over the year. Cumberland, Pa., was second with 9.3-percent growth, followed by the counties of Hudson, N.J. (9.0 percent), Henrico, Va. (8.4 percent), and Fairfield, Conn., and Rock Island, Ill. (7.7 percent each).

Thirty-five of the 322 largest counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., had the largest decrease, -6.0 percent, followed by the counties of Marin, Calif. (-5.6 percent), Hamilton, Ind. (-4.3 percent), McLean, Ill. (-2.8 percent), and St. Louis, Minn. (-2.7 percent).

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.5 million employer reports cover 129.8 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

Additional statistics and other information

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2004 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the fourth quarter 2004 version of this news release. *Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* will be available for sale in late 2005 from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512-2104. Also, the 2004 bulletin will be available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient BLS Web site location, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the Kansas City Information Office at 816-426-2481 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT.

NOTE

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Average Weekly Wages in Colorado, First Quarter 2005 (continued)

Table 1. Covered (1) employment and wages by state, first quarter 2005 (2)

State	Employment	Average weekly wage (3)			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States (4).....	129,802.3	\$775	--	2.2	--
Alabama.....	1,871.5	642	32	2.6	16
Alaska.....	290.3	744	18	1.5	37
Arizona.....	2,459.7	698	23	2.3	22
Arkansas.....	1,144.8	579	46	2.8	11
California.....	15,064.5	872	7	2.0	26
Colorado.....	2,158.6	787	11	2.2	24
Connecticut.....	1,624.7	1,084	3	3.9	3
Delaware.....	407.9	878	6	4.0	2
District of Columbia.....	661.7	1,277	1	4.2	1
Florida.....	7,731.0	679	26	3.5	7
Georgia.....	3,877.0	742	19	1.9	30
Hawaii.....	597.6	669	28	2.0	26
Idaho.....	594.2	561	47	1.6	36
Illinois.....	5,644.9	848	8	2.9	10
Indiana.....	2,838.7	667	30	0.9	47
Iowa.....	1,419.5	616	37	1.7	33
Kansas.....	1,290.7	631	34	1.4	41
Kentucky.....	1,741.2	628	35	0.6	51
Louisiana.....	1,873.8	619	36	2.8	11
Maine.....	573.2	614	38	1.7	33
Maryland.....	2,458.0	831	9	2.0	26
Massachusetts.....	3,094.8	964	4	1.2	44
Michigan.....	4,218.3	780	13	1.2	44
Minnesota.....	2,559.7	783	12	0.8	49
Mississippi.....	1,113.1	545	49	2.3	22
Missouri.....	2,644.2	671	27	0.9	47
Montana.....	403.8	533	51	3.5	7
Nebraska.....	879.8	600	42	0.8	49
Nevada.....	1,187.6	714	21	2.6	16
New Hampshire.....	606.9	745	17	2.8	11
New Jersey.....	3,863.5	963	5	1.8	32
New Mexico.....	765.0	596	43	2.1	25
New York.....	8,242.3	1,096	2	3.7	6
North Carolina.....	3,808.0	687	24	2.7	14
North Dakota.....	320.4	550	48	1.5	37
Ohio.....	5,228.6	706	22	2.0	26
Oklahoma.....	1,453.9	591	44	1.9	30
Oregon.....	1,621.6	685	25	1.5	37
Pennsylvania.....	5,481.0	747	16	1.5	37
Rhode Island.....	466.9	736	20	1.2	44
South Carolina.....	1,800.3	611	39	2.5	18
South Dakota.....	365.1	544	50	2.4	20
Tennessee.....	2,665.2	660	31	1.4	41
Texas.....	9,454.6	760	15	3.1	9
Utah.....	1,091.9	607	40	1.3	43
Vermont.....	297.5	639	33	3.9	3
Virginia.....	3,525.7	794	10	2.7	14
Washington.....	2,702.3	766	14	2.4	20
West Virginia.....	683.6	583	45	2.5	18
Wisconsin.....	2,687.0	668	29	1.7	33
Wyoming.....	246.2	606	41	3.9	3
Puerto Rico.....	1,048.2	433	(5)	3.3	(5)
Virgin Islands.....	44.2	650	(5)	13.4	(5)

(1) Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

(2) Data are preliminary.

(3) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(5) Data not included in the national ranking.